



# NEWS

## From County Supervisor Paul Biane

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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For more information, contact  
Matt Brown, Second District Chief of Staff  
(909) 387-4833

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### **Chairman Biane Lauds Proposal to Expand Immigration Screening of Inmates**

**SAN BERNARDINO** – Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Biane commended the initiative brought forward by First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt on Tuesday to expand the successful illegal immigrant screening program at West Valley Detention Center.

“Supervisor Mitzelfelt’s proposal is a cost-effective way to extend the reach of the screening program to our other jails,” Biane said. “With the help of video conferencing technology, the Sheriff’s Department will be able to identify even more illegal immigrants in County jails. This will help the County secure additional federal reimbursement for detaining these criminal illegal aliens, and it will stop these inmates from posting bail and being released back into our communities.”

Supervisor Mitzelfelt’s proposal calls for the Sheriff’s Department to install video conferencing equipment at West Valley Detention Center and four other jails: Barstow, Morongo Basin, Victor Valley and Central Detention. Sheriff’s custody specialists at West Valley Detention Center will use the video conferencing to interview inmates at the four jails and determine their immigration status. The equipment will cost \$100,000. The funding comes from the Board of Supervisors priority policy needs budget.

Supervisor Biane proposed the first illegal immigrant screening program at West Valley Detention Center – the County’s largest criminal booking facility – in 2005. Biane was concerned that United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers were not identifying all of the illegal immigrants booked into the facility because the agency did not have a full-time presence at the jail.

The County partnered with ICE to train Sheriff’s custody specialists to verify inmates’ immigration status. When a custody specialist discovers an inmate is an illegal immigrant, a detainer is placed on the inmate to prevent him/her from being released on bail. Inmates identified as illegal immigrants get their day in court and also must serve any jail or prison time handed down by a judge. Inmates are turned over to ICE for deportation after their cases are resolved.

In addition, the screening program allows the County to accurately document the number of illegal immigrants in the jail, which is critical to secure federal reimbursement from the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program.

During the first three months of 2008, Sheriff's custody specialists placed immigration detainers on 574 inmates.

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